Jealous of Dead Leaves

SHAEMAS O'SHEEL

Louisa F. Anderson

1916 BF
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JEALOUS OF DEAD LEAVES

Let us find out, if we must be constrained,
Sandals more interwoven and complete
To fit the naked feet of poesy;
Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
Of every chord, and see what may be gained
By ear industrious, and attention meet;
Misers of sound and syllable, no less
Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay-wreath crown. . . . .

KEATS.

JEALOUS OF DEAD LEAVES

Selected Verse of

SHAEMAS O'SHEEL

" . . . . let us be
Jealous of dead leaves
in the bay-wreath crown"
KEATS

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WHY

As long ago as 1918 it was suggested that I should prepare a book to consist of selections from THE BLOSSOMY BOUGH and THE LIGHT FEET OF GOATS. Two small editions of the former, published in 1911 and 1912, and one of the latter, published in 1915, had been exhausted.

Then began an examination of conscience, an humble weighing and judging, a minute line by line consideration, a process of revision and elimination, which has gone on from time to time for nine years. Although the one hundred and twenty-seven things included in those earlier volumes were a selection from a larger number which had appeared in magazines and newspapers, it was quickly evident that many of them did not deserve republication and that even the better among them exhibited many faults. Maturing judgment has, down the years, cast out more and more of them, and wrought considerable changes in many of the forty-two here retained; three of these, indeed, have been completely rewritten.

I should like to make this the occasion for setting forth certain ideas about verse and poetry, schools and tendencies, æsthetic theories and technical problems; but my advisors and publishers unanimously counsel against it. I must be content to note that in the first lyric

rapture of youth, I literally flowed verse as naturally as a spring flows water, and I called it poetry; but now poetry has become to me a high and distant goal, and a poem seems to me a kind of miracle not often accomplished. I could not bear to be judged by the faulty work of my uncritical literary adolescence, and the better things in my earlier volumes, having, once created, a sort of life and character of their own, seemed entitled to my labors to bring them to such perfection as I am capable of. It is not for me to say whether any of them now approaches poetry; but I hope that those who were kind enough to like them in their earlier forms will like them better now, and that those to whom they are new will find among them some things worthy of a place in the great body of lyric verse which is the heart's cry in the clutch of sorrow and the heart's song in the gladness of life and love.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the patient and valuable critical assistance I have had from Tudor Reed Harris, Gerhard Bruncken, Elinor Hersey and Harold Hersey.

SHAEMAS O'SHEEL.

JEALOUS OF DEAD LEAVES

THIS IS OUR DOOM

A slender sheaf—straw, straw and a few poppies,
For all the labor of our days.
A few dreams, dreams troubled and elusive,
Though the nights are long.
Ashes, our hearts at last a handful of ashes,
And yet their flames
Light such a little space in the dusk of Time.

This is the doom of those whose desire is unbounded,
To feel in the dark
The wall insurmountable,
To hear beyond hearing the song that shall never be heard,
To see beyond seeing the picture that shall not be painted;
To sense forever
In wind and water,
In wood and meadow,
In city and solitude,
More than the heart can hold or the mind encompass.
This is our doom, we weavers of Time's pale garlands,
To seek forever and find not the Rood and the Rose,
The Lips and the Grail that trouble our fevered dreams.

THEY WENT FORTH TO BATTLE BUT THEY ALWAYS FELL

They went forth to battle but they always fell.
Something they saw above the sullen shields.
Nobly they fought and bravely, but not well,
And sank heart-wounded by a subtle spell.
They knew not fear that to the foeman yields,
They were not weak, as one who vainly wields
A faltering weapon; yet the old tales tell
How on the hard-fought field they always fell.

It was a secret music that they heard,
The murmurous voice of pity and of peace,
And that which pierced the heart was but a word,
Though the white breast was red-lipped where the sword
Pressed a fierce cruel kiss and did not cease
Till its hot thirst was surfeited. Ah these
By an unwarlike troubling doubt were stirred,
And died for hearing what no foeman heard.

They went forth to battle but they always fell.
Their might was not the might of lifted spears.
Over the battle-clamor came a spell
Of troubling music, and they fought not well.
Their wreaths are willows and their tribute, tears.
Their names are old sad stories in men's ears.
Yet they will scatter the red hordes of Hell,
Who went to battle forth and always fell.

THE FIELD OF DUST

This is the field of dust.
Spear-flash and sword-thrust
Wages the battle here,
Aye, and long must!
How does this field appear?
Once 'twas a flowery place—
Gone now its vernal grace,
Trampled by steeds a-race,
Littered with sword and mace,
Wreckage and rust.
Timidly there and here
Virginal vales appear,
But the tense atmosphere
Darkens with dust.

Who is it, foul of face,
Leads a foul host apace
Into this frightened place?
Lo, he is strong!
All the winds shrink and flee,
Curdles the earth, yet see,
They own his majesty,
Loathsome and strong.
Lo, he is known too well,
He is the Khan of Hell,
Regent is he of Wrong,
Lord of this reeling throng,
Reeling and whirling long,
Savage and fell.

Leads he this host obscene,
Miring the living green,
Leaving no waters clean,
Chanting a spell
Whereat the Heavens flame
Scarlet with wordless shame
And all things of fair fame
Echo of Hell.
Delicate things they dash
Doomward, fair temples crash
Terribly, and their lash
Cuts to the bone.
Woe to all things that grow
Upward, and wail and woe
Unto the fair, follow
That host alone.
Ah that the green and fair
Valleys of anywhere
Must know and must,
Such a dark armament
Fouling the firmament,
Making a flowery zone
Dark field of dust.

Spear-flash and sword-thrust
Wages the battle here,
Aye, and long must.
See what bright wings appear
Over the dust!

Who is it, glad with grace,
Morning upon his face,

Swifter than light apace
Pierces the dark,
Strikes to his mark,
Glorifies all the place,
Laying the demons stark?
Hark to his clarion, hark—
Sunlight made audible,
Glad with a golden spell,
Golden with grace!
White all his warriors are,
Each spear a piercing star,
Lending a light to war,
And every face
Blends wrath and pity so
Scarce need they strike a blow.
Fair things that used to grow
In this sad place
Look up and glorify
Once more an aureate sky,
And the dread demons fly
Shrieking and fall and die
Stricken apace.
Surely his name is known
Close to the Infinite Throne,
Sure it must spell
Strength of the Living God—
Hail, Mich-a-el!

Spear-flash and sword-thrust
Wages the battle here,
Aye, and long must.

What is the field of dust?
What are the hosts that here
Robed with red wrath appear,
Hot with war-lust,
Dark mace and starry spear
Splint'ring in mad career,
Clouding a world so fair
With their grim gust?
Ah, not from Heaven or Hell
Host they who wage so well:
Lucifer, Mich-a-el
Are not their names.
Their strength no miracle
Of power Celestial
Nor of the Flames.
And the broad battle-place
Where they meet face to face
Bruiting their claims,
Is no terrestrial strand,
No astrologic land:
I am those valleys, and
I am their names.

I am the field of dust,
I who am body and soul.
I am the muster-roll
Of all the demons foul,
I am the splendid whole
Legion whose spears extol
God, whose sword-thrust
Gilds the dark dust.

Here does the battle roll
Endless, and must.
I am the Khan of Hell,
Regent am I of Wrong,
I am God's angel strong,
I, Mich-a-el.
Out of the deeps of me
Throng the red cavalry
And the white angels, see,
In my soul dwell.
Naught can assail me, naught
Cause the red ruin wrought
But my own lust,
And I can trust
Naught but my God-hood, naught.
My own the rage outpoured,
I am the spear and sword,
I am the Fiend and Lord,
I am the dust.

Spear-flash and sword-thrust
Rages the battle here,
Aye, and long must.

CONSCIENCE

For all our whipped and goaded ecstasies,
Our passionate forgettings, we remember—
Amid the mirth and music we remember—
How One is waiting with an ultimate question
Before the inviolable gates of God.

No. I have done. Implacable desire,
Cease, cease!
No more the urgent ways, no more, I tire—
I who went forth mantled with morning fire
Pray now surcease
And peace—peace.

O passionate terrible futile fierce desire,
Imperative and vain,
Blow not again
Your irresistible trumpet, and your lyre
Sound not again.
There is no magic in your martial choir
Now, only pain.

A young soul, sure of wonder, hot blood in the heart,
Limbs of the leaping goat—all these I had,
And spurned a myriad summits gained, to start
Down through new vales to newer heights apart,
And I was glad
Of every peril, I was insatiably mad
For more—more—knowledge, wisdom, passion, art!

But now release
Your broken bondsman from his broken bond.
What is beyond
This and the next horizon and beyond
The last horizon, could not give me peace:
That I have learned at last, and therefore cease
The bloody goad and the illusory wand.

My life's a burning arrow shot in the dark,
Fearfully arching heaven to find no mark.
Must it be always warfare, never peace?
Nay then I ground my arms, I will not hark
The old command. I watch a dying fire,
I turn to the calm hills, to the rooted trees.
Yet—that mad vision, beckoning beyond these!
O protean pitiless perilous dread desire,
Cease, cease!

OUTWORN

Oh unassuageable thirst, oh wordless hunger,
And all that is the grey of dying hours,
Dead things that wear the semblance of desires
Long since betrayed and virginal no longer,
Feverish with the futile lust of powers
That once lit all the world with morning fires!

Not as of old your tremulous whispering fingers,
Autumnal poplars, move across my soul
Soothing it like white hands upon the brow.
It is a bitter thing that memory lingers,
It is a bitter thing that seasons roll,
But oh, most bitter the inexorable Now!

Not as of old O grey of dying hours,
O green O gold O rose that die to grey,
Not as of old are you the ultimate glory,
The perfect bloom of light. Rather, sad flowers
Languishing for their lady torn away
From her fair garden in some tragic story.

Beneath unpitying clouds, over dull waters,
Defeated flags irreparably torn
Droop from the sad walls of the hollow West.
Weary with strife are the sons of men, and the daughters
Weary with passionate waiting, and outworn
Is all the impulsive rapture of the quest.

Gold, and the color of rose, and the green of the world
Only a mask to hide the ashen face

Of Death, the master of Time's pageantry!
Oh beautiful ones, a pitiless net is curled
Under the rushes, under the revels' pace:
This night ends all, no dawn will ever be.

Dawn but a dream—and waking we press once more
Westward, upon the solitary path
That leads through vistaed sunset into night.
Hoping for peace we meet our doom of war,
Loving, we bow to this implacable wrath.
Emptied of faith at last, emptied of might,

We are grey phantoms of the dying hours,
Doomed things, wearily passing. O fair face,
Do you not bear one memory of the morn?
What is the light upon your brow—what flowers
Bloom in your hand? I see the ineffable grace
Of drooping petals, of fading days forlorn.

OUR LITTLE DAYS

Our days are like drops of water that drip perhaps from
a fern-frond
Into a quiet pool. Our immemorial days
Drop drop one by one into the Pool of Time.
Little ripples rise, hope and joy and passion,
Little ripples rise, fretting the pool's surface,
Little ripples rise and flow and ebb are gone,
And quiet comes and peace comes and broods on the
Pool of Time.

THE LIGHT FEET OF GOATS

Up from lone peak to peak of thought if we leap,
From height to lonelier visionary height,
As goats light-footed leap along windy crags,
It is our dreams that muscle us, steady the eye,
Give us the sure foot and the exultant heart.
Dreams are the light feet of goats on the crags of Time.

HE WHOM A DREAM HATH POSSESSED

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more of doubting,
For mist and the blowing of winds and the mouthing of words he scorns.
No sinuous speech and smooth he hears, but a knightly shouting,
And never comes darkness down, yet he greeteth a million morns.

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more of roaming.
All roads and the flowing of waves and the speediest flight he knows,
But wherever his feet are set his soul is forever homing,
And going he comes, and coming he heareth a call and goes.

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more of sorrow.
At death and the dropping of leaves and the fading of suns he smiles,
For a dream remembers no past and takes no thought of a morrow,
And staunch amid seas of doom a dream sets the ultimate isles.

He whom a dream hath possessed treads the impalpable marches.
From the dust of the day's long road he leaps to a laughing star,

And the ruin of worlds that fall he views from eternal
arches,
And rides God's battlefield in a flashing and golden car.

TRUTH AND PASSION

(For Anne)

There is a fire God holds in His naked hands.
Above the clouds, above the unquiet clouds
We see it as a star and call it Truth.
I think that these blown flames of our gusty passions,
That feed on Beauty and have Love for their brightness,
Are wandering sparks of that eternal fire.
They will abide. Our joys are mayflies, dying
After a feeble flutter of wings. Our hopes
Fade fast as Winter twilights, and our firm
Fixed purposes are lamps that flicker and fail.
But these shall burn, outlasting the clinkered stars,
When tired God blows out the lights of Time.

THE LOVER PRAISES HIS LADY'S BRIGHT BEAUTY

Some night I think if you should walk with me
Where the tall trees like ferns on the ocean's floor
Sway slowly in the blue deeps of the moon's flood,
I would put up my hands through that impalpable sea
And tear a branch of stars from the sky, as once I tore
A branch of apple blossoms for you in an April wood.

And I would bend the dewy branch of stars about your
little head
Till they flamed with pride to be as blossoms amid your
hair,
But I would laugh to see them so pale, being near your
eyes.
I would say to you "Love, the Immortals are hovering
about your head,
They laugh at the dimness of stars in the luminous
night of your hair."
I would toss that weeping branch back to the mournful
skies.

THE LOVER SCORNS ALL WOMEN BUT HIS LADY

Were all the women of the world to come
And droop their languorous hair about my heart,
They could not hold it in those nets so fine,
And pleading with lips lyrical or dumb,
Pleading with excess of all amorous art,
They could not win the kisses that are thine.

If Helen came, her white limbs hung with gold,
And Deirdre with dim visionary eyes,
And Grania, flame-haired, fiery with command;
If Hero came—reluctant once of old—
And she who all too long with Romeo lies,
And she who led Dante heavenward by the hand,

They could not make me fain of their fain lips
Nor lure me to the languor of warm breasts
With any soft compulsion of white arms,
And delicate dim touch of finger tips
And smouldering eyes where passion leaps and rests
Would leave me cold and lose the name of charms.

Nay, Solomon's Love and Anthony's Desire,
Heloise and frail Francesca, and their queen
Immortal Aphrodite, whom I praise,
Naked before me could not touch with fire
The calm pulse of my blood, for I have seen
Beauty within thy beauty for all days.

LOVE WILL OUTBLOOM THE WORLD

Oh more than ever and more than I can tell
I love you, and my love grows evermore,
As the wave widens to the waiting shore
From the small wound wherein the pebble fell.
Such way of love beyond all ways is well,
Since the heart does not burn to a sad core
With its first flaming, but forevermore
Grows more intense with love than I can tell.

Think O Belovéd to what nameless glory
This flower must grow which blossomed first so fair,
For surely wakened never anywhere
So proud a Rose of Love, in deed or story.
It will outbloom this withering clod the world,
Rooted in God and never to be furled.

THE LOVER THINKS OF HIS LADY IN A GLEN

I loitered in a little glen.
A bird was there and nothing else
Except the waters wandering by.
Whitely they fell and wandered by,
A bird flew over, nothing else
Save I, within the lonely glen.

I called upon the waters then
To sing your name; and nothing else
Should be the bird's melodious cry.
The waters fell and wandered by,
A droning music, nothing else.
A bird song wavered through the glen.

And since the waters would not cry
Your name of names and nothing else,
Nor the bird sing it through the glen,
I breathed it through the leafy glen.
Then the hushed air began to pulse,
And joyous winds to wander by.

THE LOVER BIDS ALL PASSIONATE WOMEN MOURN

Mourn with red lips, pale women who wander alone,
Having each a sorrow too great for another to share,
Deirdre whose fate was saddest because you were most fair,
Finavar, doomed for your pride to carry a heart of stone,
And all who were broken because of your loveliness,
Mourn with dishevelled hair, for you understand
The heart of a lover, you know that its bitter distress
If love should fail, is more than the grief of a land
For its strong spear-bearing sons who have met defeat.
Mourn for I tell you my Love who is passing sweet
As berries in Autumn, and fair as a blossomy bough,
And proud with a pride like yours, pale sorrowful ones,
Has taken her thoughts from me and broken her vow,
And the world is a terrible crumbling of moons and of suns.
Mourn with dim eyes, O sad and beautiful ones.

THE BITTERNESS OF LOVE

As I went through the rustling grasses
Over the long low dune,
I saw on the sands two lovers,
And I saw the waves and the moon.

And I heard the unaltering murmur
Of the sea, and a wind that stirred,
And I heard the lovers breathing
Many a passionate word.

And because I too am a lover
And my love is far from me,
I hated the two on the sands there,
And the moon and the wind and the sea.

WHEN SHE CAME NOT

I thought I heard her when the wind would pass
Down through the pine trees and the tangled grass,
I thought I heard her tremulously near
When no sound was.
I thought I heard her little feet
Over the wave-washed pebbles beat
And that I need but lift mine eyes
And see her there without surprise.
I thought, alas!
That she was tremulously near
When no sound was,
And raised my head and threw my arms apart.
But she
Was nowhere 'twixt the forest and the sea.

HER WAY WITH MY DREAMS

The wind stirs the tangle of her tresses
where she stands.
She stoops and gathers in rose-pale hands
A myriad grains of the drifting sands.

Musing, she sifts them through fingers slim:
The wind whirls them seaward, a current dim.
They are soon forgotten, as any whim.

She gathered my dreams as the drifting sands,
Gently, as one who understands:
She scattered them with rose-white hands.

THE SEEKER OF ROSES GOES ASTRAY

Where is the valley of poppies?
I have lost my way.
I sought the valley of roses.

But I went astray.
I shall never find the roses.
I want the poppies today.

Where is the valley of clover?
I am wandering.
None will know me a lover,

And there's peace for everything
In the white valley of clover.
I shall not sing.

Ah, some still vale and wordless, anyone!
My quest was a rose-quest,
But I've lost them, that is done.

Maybe I found and bruised them,
Is that what you say?
Maybe—I will not tell.

But I am astray:
Where are the poppies, the clover?
Show me some way!

THE LOVER ENVIES AN OLD MAN

I envy the feeble old man
Dozing there in the sun.
When all you can do is done
And life is a shattered plan,
What is there better than
Dozing in the sun?

I could grow very still
Like an old stone on a hill
And content me with the one
Thing that is ever kind,
The tolerant sun.
I could grow deaf and blind
And never hear her voice
Nor dream I could rejoice
With her in any place.
I could forget her face,
Forget, and have done.
Because when we are tired,
Very, very tired,
And cannot again be fired
By any hope,
The sun is so comforting!
A little bird under the wing
Nestling, is not so warm.
Give me only the scope
Of an old chair
Out in the air,
Let me rest there,

Moving not,
Loving not,
Only dozing my days toll my days be done,
Under the sun.

MYSELF, NOT GALAHAD

Before the picture of an armored knight
She placed a candle with a little light,
A tapered candle with a steady flame
That put a glow of gold about the name
Galahad. "It is your candle" was her word,
And first I wondered, then my youth was stirred
To a resolve as fine as this her thought,
To be her knight in all things, and in naught
Less worthy of her than that storied knight,
Puissant and pure above my candle's light.

How long before I learned that youth is frail
When in the lonely questing of the Grail
Immediate sweet cups are offered him?
How long before I knew that dreams can dim,
And only a tenuous thread of faith remain
The wanderer's guide through ways of sin and pain?
How long before my knightly crest sunk low?
Yet for the whole adventure I can show
At last the only guerdon that I sought,
My Love's own love; because it seemed as naught
To her that I had mingled good and bad.
It is myself she loves, not Galahad,
And when disarmed I came to her again,
She kissed me. There is no more sin or pain.

THE LOVER IS SURE OF LOVE

When I went hushed and lonely
Where violets were blue
And little wood-anemones
Were white, I thought of you.

And when amid white daisies
I lay on fragrant grass,
With carefree comrades singing
To help the twilight pass—

Although my head was pillowed
On gay Camilla's arm,
Her small hand warm within my own
And over me her charm,

Although I twined pale blossoms
Into her red-gold hair,
And saw her eyes above me bent
And saw that they were fair—

My heart, O my Belovéd,
Was silent with a dream,
And through the twilight of my soul
There came a vibrant gleam:

And as the stars flamed whitely
Down deepening seas of blue,
My being broke to flame-like love
And star-like thoughts of you.

IN TIME OF FAILURE THE LOVER TAKES COMFORT IN LOVE

Though chosen fellows prove but fools
And brothers sworn betray my trust
And topple my towers to the dust
And break my sword and dull my tools,

Though all my labor is in vain,
My ev'ry plan a bubble blown,
My ev'ry hope a phantom flown,
My sole reward the coin of pain—

And though the crown I thought to make
For you, and all I thought to win
Of jewelled delights to set therein
With loving labor for your sake

Must now be numbered with the grey
Pale phantoms that forevermore
Await upon life's farther shore
The word that God forgets to say—

What matter, Love? I seem to wake
From some hot frenzy of a dream,
And all I did therein I deem
But faulty service for your sake.

And here in the calm hush of night,
With many quiet stars above,
I weave a robe of perfect love
From cloth of dark and threads of light,

I weave a robe of perfect love
From all the beauty of the night,
And you will wear it in despite
All sorrow, and be glad thereof.

ON AN APRIL EVE

My lover gave three kisses,
He kissed me thrice when we met,
And each kiss lingers with me
Like music I cannot forget.
There are duties that wait my doing
And the moments are passing—yet—
My lover gave three kisses
To me, to me when we met.

Like the winds of the Spring is my lover,
Impetuous, fain of delight.
Quickly he drew me to him
And he held me close in his might:
He called me as fair as the blossoms
That are making the branches bright.

He called me as fair as the blossoms,
But I know when he comes tonight
He will say there's no starry beauty
Like my own eye's little light—
He will tell me that when he holds me
Close to his heart tonight.

Oh my cheeks and my throat he kindled
With kisses today, but my mouth
Was locked like the lips of the meadow
In the length of the Winter's drouth.
Tonight he will lure and compel me
With the warmth of the winds of the South,
I shall throw back my head, and my lover
Will waken the Spring on my mouth.

COLD BEAUTY

Cold lips to kiss not but obey,
Cold eyes that grant no passion sway,
This is her beauty in the day.

Ah but I know how fiercely bright
When bared to one dear lover's sight
Her beauty flames and burns at night!

AN ISLE OF DREAMS

Lone, in a sea of many currents, a fair island.
The waters rage and the winds bear sudden terrors.
Winds and waters grow calm at the shores of the island.

Grey, as a glen ere the dawn, dream-laden, grey—
Green terrible deeps in the waters, and on the winds
Red lightning—but over the island all things are grey.

Immortal sunset saddens evermore
Under the drooping sky; but like a song
Unbreathed, eternal dawn hovers on Heaven's shore.

Flowers like dear remembered words are there,
And vales like dearer memoried silences.
Old glances of loved eyes are the blue lakes there.

Only upon the secret island, the grey isle of dreams,
Are beauty, freedom, peace: there only heart's content.
Wings are folded at last in still places on the isle of dreams.

ISADORA

I

The islands dawn out of the mist, the blue
Islands dawn out of the sea, the silver
Waves break upon saffron sands, and flashing,
The feet of laughing girls scatter the gleaming
Dew, scatter the dewdrops from the purple
Hyacinths, dancing waywardly to the distant
Clear winding of Poseidon's twisted conch.

Ah, Hellas, Hellas, dawn of this troubled human
Dream, lift up, lift up your hyacinthine
Headlands. All your honey colored, honey
Laden meadows murmur again with music,
Thin reedy notes startle once more your leafy
Glades where rushy pools caress the pallor
Of maiden limbs, and mossy couches know the
Sweet pains of maiden love. The long sun-dappled
Long silent aisles beneath the oak trees echo
The lute of Orpheus; upon the ancient
Hills, upon the little hills the ancient
Olives lean and listen; and the lonely
Midnights of windy mountains know the argent
Piping of shepherds amorous of the stars.

II

O Proserpine awaken,
Your poppied slumber shaken
By these swift feet that flash across the centuries and
the seas.

O goddess glad, renascent,
Trouble our hearts complacent,
Trouble us with the wonder of her passionate ecstasies.

See, garlanded and gracious,
From realms serene and spacious,
A grave and ancient rapture she has brought our troubled times.
Bearer of mystic treasures,
With magic in her measures,
She comes, her light steps lyric and her white feet shod with rhymes.

III

Towers dawn suddenly out of the mist, eager
Towers reach up, seizing the dawn, impatient
Towers that fretted all the night, resenting
The hand of darkness soothing, the hand of silence,
They snatch the dawn, bending it down, breaking
Its roseate loveliness, breaking its fragile
Stillness, suddenly clamorous with a million
Voices. Old Poseidon's horn not heard here,
Nor the half-dreamy songs of dancing girls, nor
Lute notes and argent pipings. From the waters
Jubilant whistles piercing the sunlight, deep-toned
Horns throbbing, throbbing into the blood. Here
Up from the granite canyons, up from the steel-ribbed
Furnaces, up from the fiery-bellied
Forges, loud, the roar of flame, staccato,
Hammer on hammer, steel on steel, and whirling
Wheels, wheels whirling, grinding, wheels forever

Rushing, rolling, voices, a hundred million
Voices loud in speech, strident, in song too
Strident, voices ribald in song, and mocking
Music that booms, music that blares and gurgles,
Flung on the air and caught again, repeated,
Multiplied, endlessly multiplied by busy
Machines, Oh hammer on hammer and steel on steel,
Wheels and voices and flame, upward this chorus
Ripples and roars, whirling about the slender
Towers, arrogant, proud, lustily tearing
The fragile dawn, shouting aloud in the ardent
Noon, fretfully murmuring still and petulant
When silence and stars timidly claim the night.

IV

Undaunted by the menace of our days,
Untroubled by the temper of our times,
Unflinching in the fever of our ways,
Beauty she brings from old Ionian climes.
Proserpine loved her and she danced with Pan,
The Pythoness has whispered in her ears,
With wonder that once moved the soul of Man
She challenges these gross and barren years.

Ah, can we still the whirling of our wheel
To watch the dawn and dance beside the sea?
Still the staccato hammer of steel on steel
While Orpheus laments Eurydice?
Shall this glad Dryad droop in our torrid noon,
Or shall we have our youth back, strong and fleet,

And dance with her beneath some imminent moon,
Led by the laughter of intrepid feet?

V

Vale, Vale!

White petals float on the air, and turn, and gleam in the sun, but downward; they are still, on the ground.
Crisp leaves scurrying under the moon grow heavy with dew; there is an end of gay motion.
The swallow's arced flight is over, the lark wearies of heaven, the flute is emptied of sound.
The beautiful winged ship lies broken at the edge of ocean.

Oh monstrous!—the hell-black horses come thundering up from Dis,
The remorseless arm of the god has snatched her, our Proserpine; she is gone.
Never a wing in the blue but is furled at last, and never a song but shall cease,
And in the end white feet that dance by the sea pace slowly by Acheron.

I saw Pacific's opal waves grow grey, and I heard its reproaches spoken,
It cried to the Middle Sea, Where is my Beautiful One?
And the Middle Sea replied, Is not even Niké Apteros broken?
Yet is she beautiful and holy, even unto the last day of the sun!

MACDOWELL: AN ELEGY

I

His hand indeed no more shall touch the keys,
Caressing or commanding.
At no green portal standing
Henceforth shall he hear
The murmurous birth of woodland harmonies
With mortal ear.
His eyes now close
Forever to the rose,
His voice is still.
Never on the hill
His foot shall press again.
He is done with gladness,
He is done with sadness,
He is done with pain.

Oh mourn him on the mountain
And praise him on the plain.

II

Now let us like that shepherd folk of old
People the heavens with our heroes, changed
To the immortal glory of bright stars.
There is that forest-hero, fabled first
Sower of corn on this broad continent,
And there that constellation of great souls
Who brought the mystic bread and wine, and there
That galaxy of high intrepid hearts
Who wrote the epic of our liberties

And signed it with the sword. How brightly flames
That troubled star whose days the raven shadowed,
Our Israfel, who gave us poetry.
And how serene that luminous sage who lit
In quiet Concord our first lamp of wisdom.
Make place, make place, Immortals, and give ear!
This is the morningstar of our high music,
That waited through the centuries for his touch.

He has taken the tang of pine and spruce and hemlock,
Green sunlight filtering through birch and maple,
Little waters wandering down rocky glens,
And woven them to music. He has taken
The murmurous voices of broad-bosomed rivers,
The rustling voices of horizonless prairies,
The mighty iterant surges of great seas
That shout against our shores, the boisterous winds
That in huge play ruffle our shaggy mountains,
And woven them to music. He remembers
The chant of redskinned huntsmen in the ruddy
Glow of tribal fires, he has noted
The eagle poised, appalling, in the air,
And what of eagle there is in our souls
And what of viking and of voyager,
What heritage the many races brought
Of their long dim traditions—from the fjords,
From the rose-gardens of old England, from
The sunny Irish plains and Highland glens,
And he has woven all of them to music,
Our own at last, our own, American.
Make place for him, Immortals, in our skies!

This song that was he has sung itself to silence,
Silence, the perfect end of every song.

Only as we are saddened when music ceases,
When the entwining harmonies at last
End in a perfect chord, only but so
Mourn we his passing. Death is part of being.
He was, he sang, and he wrought music for us,
And he has gone to join the great of soul
Where the Dear Master, Maker of All Music,
Guides the andante of the singing stars
And the ineffable chorus of seraphim.
There he is part of endless Harmony.
And we have still the beauty of him forever
To measure our souls by. Master, Hail and Farewell!

NORTHWARD

Northward, northward!—the whole world for our own!
This world's an anvil whereupon our will,
Our strength and skill,
Must hammer out a destiny unknown.
And we must fill
With the soul's forges every sullen zone,
Even that one here where Death sits throned in cold
upon an icy throne.

Forward, forward!
Our life's one law: To grow!
Burdened and broken the sad centuries go,
Scarred with our cruel failures—yet one saw
The Deluge cheated of the just man Noah.
And one was glad to see the Chosen stand
Upon the threshold of the Promised Land.
One saw an Emperor conquered by the Cross.
And where the waters flow
Between the yearning continents, and toss
Their futile waves, one century knew how
Brave Brendan marked a pathway with his prow,
And even so
Columbus led the eager race anew.
One saw the few
Determined pioneers of all the race
Reject an empire's dominance and trace
For Freedom's feet a broad unbounded way.
And that great cycle which was yesterday
More marvels than its banded forbears knew—

Winds and the lightnings doing Man's decree,
And Nature's riddles read that all may see.
Yet more to do
Remains than all that has been done, and we,
We are the doers, the appointed doers we.

Northward!
The fearless Vikings shrunk aghast
From the inscrutable, vast
And terrible portals closing toward the Pole.
Yet by our modern breed grim Cold's control
Is broken more and more, until at last
One Man
Dashes triumphantly to that last goal
Where sits the Eternal Midas whose sad hand
Turns not to gold, but ice, what touches it.
The treacherous floor that is not sea nor land
Sinks under him, the frore floes crash and split,
Weird luminous darkness wavers warnings
Through the long night unlit by mornings,
Deadly distillments of the lethal cold
Subtly into his veins creep unawares,
But he is bold
With courage of great purpose, and he dares
Press northward still, still northward, northward fares—
Till in a moment tremulous with awe,
Silent amid white silence, lo he stands
A victor, at the Pole!
And on his soul
He feels Time's benediction, he who vindicates the Law.

Onward, forever onward!
What though the earth be bounded by the Poles,
Our still insatiate souls
Thirst for the wine of all the worlds, and thirst
For God's own mystic wine; and all the goals
With glory won, we make the sunrise wharves
Whence to new voyage, with aspiring sail,
Freighted with potencies, we start, as first
The savage from his murky vale
Started the heights to scale.
For still abides one Law,
Challenging: Ye shall grow,
Rest not, forward go!
And he who hears and does, he shall know glory, he shall be crowned with awe.

The sickle is dulled of the reaping and the threshing-floor is bare.
The dust of night's in the air.
The peace of the weary is ours.
All day we have taken the fruit and the grain and the seeds of the flowers.

The ev'ning is chill.
It is good now to gather in peace by the flames of the fire.
We have done now the deed that we did for our need and desire,
We have wrought our will.

And now for the boon of abundance and golden increase
And immuréd peace
Shall we thank our God?
Bethink us, amid His indulgence, the might of His rod?

Shall we be as the maple and oak,
To the earth give our gold, offer only bare boughs to the sky?
Nay, the pine stayeth green while the Winter growls sullenly by,
And doth not revoke

For soft days or stern days the pledge of its constancy.
Shall we not be

Also the same through all days,
Giving thanks when the battle breaks on us, in toil giving praise?

O Father who saw at the dawn
That the folly of Pride would be the lush weed of our sin,
There is better than that in our hearts, O enter therein,
A light burneth, though wan

And weak be the flame, yet it gloweth, our Humility.
Ah how can it be
Trimmed o' the wick
And replenished with oil to burn brightly and golden and quick?

For deep in our hearts
We wish to be thankful through lean years and fat without change,
Knowing that here Thou hast set for the spirit a range.
We would play well our parts,

Making America throb with the building of souls and with works that are good.
Yea and we would,
And before the last Autumn we will
Build a temple from ocean to ocean where deeds never still

Melodiously shall proclaim
Thanksgiving forever that Thou hast set here to our hand

So wondrous a mystical harvest, that Thou dost demand
Sheaves bound in Thy name,
Yea, supersubstantial sheaves of strong souls that have grown
Fain to be known
As the corn of Thine occident field:
O Yielder of All, can America worthily thank Thee till such be her yield?

In the mellowing light
Of the goldenest days that precede the grey days of the year,
We sing Thee our harvesting song and we pray Thee to hear
In the midst of Thy might:

Toil is given to us,
So shall we give thanks.
Power worketh through us,
Spending shall renew us,
Lord, receive our thanks!
Not for the garnering,
But for the mighty thing
We must do, travailing,—
For the journey and its length,
For the task and for our strength,
For the toil and tears and laughter
And the peace that cometh after,
For these, for these O Father,
Take Thou, take Thou, our Thanks!

MARY'S BABY

Joseph mild and gentle bent above the straw.
A pale girl, a frail girl suffering he saw.
"O my Love, my Mary, my Bride, I pity thee!"
"Nay, Dear," said Mary, "All is well with me."
"Baby, my Baby, O my Babe," she sang.
Suddenly the silvery night all with music rang.

Angels leading shepherds, shepherds leading sheep:
The silence of worship broke the mother's sleep.
All the meek and lowly of all the world were there.
Smiling she showed them that her Babe was fair.
"Baby, my Baby," kissing Him she said.
Suddenly a flaming star through the heavens sped.

Three old men and weary knelt them side by side,
The world's wealth forswearing, majesty and pride.
Worldly might and wisdom before a Child bent low:
Weeping, Maid Mary said "I love Him so!"
"Baby, my Baby," and the Baby slept.
Far away up Calvary a burdened shadow crept.

A NIGHT ON THE HILL

One night, one grey night when clouds hurried across
the stars
And the wind was swift and cold and full of a troubling
cry,
I quenched my lamp and opened my door and dropped
the bars
And went forth into a meadow past seas of shuddering
rye,
And over a field that ghostly lay under a ghostly sky,
And stumblingly I ran that the wind might blow more
swiftly by,
And I fell in weary delight by an old oak clenched with
scars,
And I trembled a-thrill with cold, and was content
to lie.

And the glory of God's wild mirth was revealed to me,
And I saw how the elements played at a game through
space,
How the wind was mad with a vast impetuous glee,
And a starry gladness broke on the sky's pale face.
White naked runners in the dark, the clouds a-race,
And virginal snowy dancers veiled with lace.
And an ancient laughter roared through the rocking
tree,
And ripples of elfin joy sang the flowers of that place.
And I lay like a mossy rock on the side of the hill,
And the spin of the rolling world was a dizzy thing,
And I heard when the winds a moment were suddenly
still

The cheery and lusty song that the huge tongues sing,
The tongues of flame leagues deep in earth's hollowing.
Far off I knew the great seas leapt in a ring.
And I rose with joy in my heart and peace on my will
And sought the fire on my hearth and my home's
enfolding wing.

KINE OF THE HILLS

Grave kine of the hills,
When I call you at fall of night
It is sunlight that fills
Your udders white.

I drive you East
Toward the unveiling morn.
The silent laughter of the sun
Glints on each burnished horn
And aureoles each beast
And glorifies each one.

All day on the hills,
In the wild meadows,
In the whispering copse,
In the wavering shadows,
But longest in the sunlight—
The yellow wine that spills
In golden waves about you!
And when I come and rout you
And shout you
To the West,
Where the clouds and the hills
Like lips overfain
Twilight's goblet drain
Of its last drops and its best,
It is sunlight—sunlight—sunlight that fills
Each rounded udder,
My kine of the hills!

Your shaggy coats are golden,
Golden and warm.
Your large eyes are languid
Like hours without storm,
Like pools of quiet
Where sunbeams swarm.

Here I draw from you
In the grey dusk,
Sweet as new wine,
Fragrant as musk,
The blood of gold flowers
And yellow grass
You cropped on the hills,
In the crooked pass.
Music to my ears
Fall the streams that fill the pails,
A treasure to mine eyes,
A wealth that never fails.
Oh, life in my veins and a joy my heart that fills
Is the milk of my kine, that was sunlight on the hills.

HUNTINGTON STREET, BROOKLYN

Huntington Street is a little street,
It's far from stylish and scarcely neat,
It starts at a dock and ends in a ditch.
Go from one end, I don't care which,
Right to the other end all the way
And you won't find much that is bright or gay.
Yet the little houses of Huntington Street
Are a pleasant sight for the eyes to meet,
Being old and simple and quaint and strong,
As they long have stood and will stand there long,
Each content in its cozy place
And showing the world a cheerful face.

Now surely it was this sturdy smile
The little old houses wear all the while
That lured the lean trees of Huntington Street
To hurry and hasten the Spring to greet,
With a lyric of leaves spread out in the sun
Ere any tree elsewhere had begun.
Oh, first of all in the city's grey
They started their green dance one fine day,
And there wasn't in all the North so sweet
A spot as dingy Huntington Street,
Looking end to end, and I don't care which,
Where it starts at a dock or ends in a ditch.

We who are weary,
We who are lost,
Gather at night,
And we are as boats
On a black wave tost
And have no light.

O pitying moon
We have shut you out
With a tent of words,
But I would we were
As a ghostly rout
Or as shadowy herds.

We have turned from the stars
And the wandering clouds
And the color of night,
And we chatter and drink
In the dark that shrouds
The wandering light.

O murmurous fields,
Where the color of night
Moves over dark trees,
And the flood of the moon
To the eyes gives sight,
To the soul gives peace!

IN A CAFÉ

For all the glare of the lights
That seem to leave nothing hidden,
The ancient luminous shadows
Fall here, even here, unbidden.

The music is overloud
And the laughter akin to cries,
But the old significant silences
Sometimes conquer and rise.

See, in these futile revels,
Dimly, an ancient grace—
Bewildered Beauty haunting
Each weary or wanton face.

Here where all folly flaunts
Shameless, for all to see,
I am suddenly aware
Of wisdom and mystery.

ONE SEEN IN BOHEMIA

Brown scarf and red-brown hair and pale small face,
Had my love been with me to-night I had said
"Here is one made for dreams come into this place.
Long ago surely a prince would have crowned that head,
And called upon lords and people to bow to her delicate grace,
And called upon lords and bishops to bow where she should tread.
Nay but a prince, had he met her under the trees
When he followed the red buck over the brown dry leaves
With the cry of the hounds in his ears, would have forgotten these,
And his stately queen, and honor, and all that grieves,
For a secret hour in her arms and the flame of her red-brown hair."
And my Love would have answered, "Aye, she is fair,
Somehow like red-brown fluttering frail small leaves.
Do you not see how the hollow laughter, the music, the glare,
And wine and words are warring upon her there?"

WOMEN WITH SHAWLS

By my windows which look out
On a polite and pleasant street,
There often pass
Women of the squalid quarter down the hill:
Creatures of timid faith and querulous doubt,
Brief love and little song and small deceit,
Brief sleep, long toil, a roof, a rag, and meat—
Patience beneath unrealized defeat,
Mortgaged too deep to fate, alas!
To leave much scope for will.
And they are slow and large and ponderous,
And are not beautiful as all women should be,
For under life's incessant mockery
Those things that most make woman beauteous,
Serenity, wonder, gentleness, have quite gone.
Dull as a burdened river they go on,
With no complaint, no choice, no change, no thrill,
Brown clods with so much muscle, so much nerve,
A womb and two breasts each, who still must serve
As fate directs, until
Fate bids them be quite still.
I fancy they are quiet when they go.
And so
They pass, each folded in a sullen shawl,
Death's forward symbol, Life's ironic pall.

FOR MUSIC STIRS OLD THOUGHTS

One day when I was very glad,
  One cloudless afternoon,
I played upon my violin
  An old remembered tune—
Played for the happiness I had,
  The joys I hoped for soon.

An old man sitting in the sun
  Grew rapt to hear me play.
The look that came upon his face
  Meant more than I can say.
And when a mist was in his eyes
  He rose and went away.

A PRAYER OF VERY OLD MEN

Ah, Time, too cruel, your harpy years
Having stolen our laughter, steal our tears.
Oh, being content our mirth to keep,
Relent, relent and let us weep!

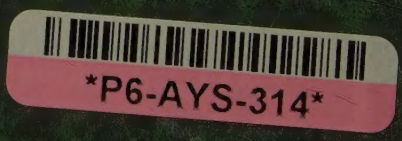
A HOPE AT LEAST

Its lines are all unwritten, and afar
In quiet caverns of the morning, wait
The rhythms it must hurl against the Gate,
And in the nebula of an unborn star
Unborn its high predestinate glories are.
But the winged magic that must guide it straight
To quickening hearts, will call me soon or late
From some far wind, some word vernacular.

Oh, there will be rare revelry in my soul,
As when a king's house glows with sudden sound
To hail the newborn man-child of a king,
And where the immortal stars of beauty roll
Through the vast heavens of thought that have no bound,
New flame will leap when my true song I sing.

NO ART CAN TELL

The bright dream burning deep at heart,
No hand has seized, no word has told it.
Melodies that could unfold it
Still elude our subtlest art.
Form we mould in paint and granite,
Doing so our passionate duty,
Fronts the world with wondrous beauty,
But we weep to see and scan it.
That is why we go despairing
In a world of love and laughter,
Heed no past and no hereafter,
Find no rest in all our faring.
That is why we are the sad.
What shall keep our hearts from breaking?
Still unmade for all our making!
Naught to tell the dream we had!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